

FREEDOMISM

Randomly generated opinions

The Internet is one of mankind's greatest accomplishments. It has connected millions of people, changed how our societies function as we know it, and has brought massive amounts of information directly to our homes. However, with new technologies come new misrepresentations – the Internet is constantly labeled "dangerous" and "unreliable". Too many websites are stereotyped and labeled unacceptable for use in citations and referencing. This article will focus on one in particular: Google Books. Why not Wikipedia? I *will* write about Wikipedia later, a website that has suffered rocky academic relations, but one personal situation involving Google Books I had a few days ago demands that I write about it as soon as possible, while it is still on my mind.

As the Internet becomes ever-expanding and accessible, it replaces older forms of communication. Commonplace information and entertainment sources like the telephone, television, books and newspapers are being reincarnated in virtual form. A timely example: earlier this week, Google announced [Google TV](#), merging the Internet and television into one. Once it is released, TV will morph into another branch of the Internet, absorbed by the progression of technology.

While it's doubtful that physical books will ever be replaced, their virtual counterpart, e-books, are becoming increasingly popular. Entire libraries are being copied onto the Internet, removing the hassle of having to travel and *look* for a book. A prime example of this is [Google Books](#). This amazing service catalogues thousands upon thousands of books, ready to read seconds after typing the title into the search bar. Books on Google Books *are* books, just easier to access. However, when I attempted to cite a book I had read on Google Books for a project last week, it was denied and my grade was accordingly affected. Apparently, the citation had to not just be a book, but a *physical* book. I was dumbfounded. What is the difference? The content of a physical book transferred onto Google Books differs *in no way* from a book in a library, correct? There is no argument here, a book on Google Books *is* a book. It doesn't matter if you can hold it or not, the fact is that a book is a book regardless of its format; if it is displayed on paper, a Kindle, an iPad or on your computer screen. The definition of "book" – "a printed or written literary work" – applies equivalently in the virtual world as well.

It's really just sickening to see people punished for using the Internet as a resource. We must get over our obsession with avoiding the Internet as if it's dangerous; the Internet is the very future of information. Yes, physical resources are nice, and they will not and should not be phased out. But in a world where we can access *more* information, easily and without hassle, why shouldn't we? In my project, was I being graded on my willingness to travel to a library, or how appropriate my citation was? It *should* be the latter. The requirements asked for a book citation, I produced a book citation. The information that I cited doesn't suddenly become "unreliable" after it is scanned and published online. The truth is that the ways we use knowledge are changing, and we must learn to accept virtual information as equal to physical information. I will continue to rely on Google Books as an education tool, because it's a library that I don't have to drive to. All of its content is scans of books, pamphlets and comics. Word for word, letter for letter, there are no differences compared to the physical versions of the books. Or should I needlessly burn gas and waste time searching libraries for something that I can get in identical form in one minute? I think not.